

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF ORISSA AT CUTTACK**

**W.P.(C) No.16579 of 2020**

***Shri Prafulla Samantara***

....

***Petitioner***

Mr. Ishwar Mohanty, Advocate

-versus-

***State of Odisha***

....

***Opposite Party***

Mrs. Saswata Patnaik, A.G.A.

**CORAM:  
THE CHIEF JUSTICE  
JUSTICE R. K. PATTANAİK**

**ORDER**

**25.04.2022**

**Order No.**

21. 1. An affidavit has been filed by the Principal Secretary to the Government, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Department dated 21<sup>st</sup> April 2022 stating *inter alia* that on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2022 a fresh communication has been sent to all Collectors stating that “no eligible beneficiaries under PDS shall be denied ration due to non-seeding of Aadhaars or Bank Account numbers.” The said communication containing certain other instructions has been enclosed with the affidavit.
2. As regards the persons mentioned in the press report of *Orissa Post* dated 6<sup>th</sup> April 2022, it is stated that in order to ascertain the factual position in Rasulpur Block, a State squad randomly visited eight villages in four Gram Panchayats and noted that of the 36,097 ration card holders, 1951 having 2325 number of members have no Aadhaars or invalid Aadhaars and are suffering from old age and critically ill condition or are leprosy affected, differently abled persons. According to the affidavit, these persons “are supplied rations through Aadhaar

bypass mode”. A team supposed to have met fifteen families in the eight villages who have been supplied PDS in “Aadhaar bypass mode”.

3. Mr. Ishwar Mohanty, learned counsel for the Petitioner points out that in Rasulpur Block there are over 100 villages and the State squad has only randomly visited eight of them and therefore, it is likely that there are others who may not be getting supplies due to non-seeding of either the Aadhaar or the bank account number in the ration card.

4. Mrs. Saswata Patnaik, learned Additional Government Advocate for the State submits that there are Nodal Officers in every Districts whose names and numbers are available on the website of the Department. She states that if the attention of any of the Nodal Officers is drawn to the persons who may not be receiving rations despite the fresh circular dated 18<sup>th</sup> April 2022, prompt action will be taken by the concerned Nodal Officer to ensure that no ration card holders is denied ration for want of seeding of Aadhaar or Bank account number.

5. As regards weeding out of duplicate ration cards, it is seen that the Minister of State for Ministry of Rural Development and Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India in an answer given in Parliament on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 placed statistics showing the number of ration cards deleted by the State/Union Territories between 2014 and 2021. As far as Odisha is concerned, this exercise was carried out in the years 2016 and 2017 and a total number of 6,86,211 ration cards appeared to have been cancelled on the ground that they were duplicate or wrongly issued. Consequently, there cannot be an apprehension entertained by the State regarding the same person making a claim for rations in more than one District. Nevertheless, if the Department does have a database of the ration card holders, it

should be possible for them check whether this is happening without resorting to seeding of Aadhaar numbers in the ration cards.

6. On next date i.e., 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022, the Court will be kept apprised of the further developments in the matter.

7. List on 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2022.

*(Dr. S. Muralidhar)*  
*Chief Justice*

*(R. K. Pattanaik)*  
*Judge*

*S.K. Guin*

